

Opening Statement of the Honorable Joe Pitts
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “A Financial Review of the Department of Health and Human Services and Its
FY 2014 Budget”
April 18, 2013

(As Prepared for Delivery)

First, I would like to thank Secretary Sebelius for appearing before the subcommittee to discuss the administration's FY2014 budget request for the Department of Health and Human Services.

While the budget request is 65 days late, and both the House and Senate have already passed their respective budget resolutions, it is still important that the country know what the administration's priorities are for the upcoming fiscal year.

As implementation of the Affordable Care Act is now a major item in the president's request, this hearing will allow members to ask the secretary questions about the law directly from our constituents.

The law is simply not working as advertised. It was sold to the American people as a job creator. The administration put forward an estimate that four million jobs would be created.

Instead, red tape and a new employer mandate are discouraging companies from creating new full time jobs. In many instances, workers are seeing their hours cut to part-time or only finding part-time jobs are available.

Even the Federal Reserve has noted that the uncertainty being created by the law is holding back hiring. I have personally heard from constituents who have been harmed by the mandate.

Let me be perfectly clear, when the government makes it more expensive and more complex to hire workers, companies will hold back on hiring. That's just a simple economic principle. However, that doesn't seem to carry much weight with government regulators.

The law was sold as saving the American people money. Yet today, wherever I go I hear from individuals and businesses with insurance premiums growing by double digits.

Now, you may say that this is because everyone is going to have gold standard, government-approved insurance. Let me remind you that the American people were told by the president that each family would save \$2,500 a year. That wasn't a promise that came with a caveat. In fact, that promise was made with a deadline that it would happen in the first term. That first term is over, and the non-partisan Politifact rates that as a broken promise.

Again, let's be clear, businesses and individuals are seeing their premiums rise as a direct result of the law.

I know that some may shake their heads and wonder why Republicans don't just move along and learn to tolerate the ACA.

We should not tolerate a government law that makes it harder for our constituents to find and keep a full-time job. Congress should not tolerate regulations that drive up costs for struggling businesses. Finally, we should not stand by and watch Americans with pre-existing conditions be left out of the plan that was intended to give them coverage.

I will continue to look for ways to make health care more affordable, more accessible, and simpler for the American people. While it would be best if we could start by repealing the ACA, that law will not stop me and my colleagues from proposing constructive health care reforms.

Madam Secretary, we hope that you will stay to answer all of our questions, and, with only five minutes of questions per member, we ask that you keep your answers concise and to the point.

The constituents we hear from every day, including those who are able to be here in the audience today, deserve answers.

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